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19 May 1958

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DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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Bloc-Yugoslav dispute: Belgrade is apparently resigned to a general deterioration of official and economic relations with Moscow. Replying Pravda's attack of 9 May, Borba on 17 May reaffirmed Yugoslavia's determination not to be shaken from its independent internal and external policies. The Yugoslav statement declares that acceptance of Moscow's terms for continuance of normal state relations would amount to virtual surrender.

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The crisis in Algeria:*yes*

Algeria: General Salan has established two separate de facto bodies to run civilian and military affairs in Algeria. Jacques Soustelle's presence will strengthen the new regime and is likely to increase the influence of local civilian extremists who are particularly opposed to any compromise with Paris. Certain army leaders in Algeria who have substantial support seem determined to settle for nothing less than the return of De Gaulle to power in Paris. [redacted]

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no

Tunisia: President Bourguiba believes that the likelihood of some action against Tunisia by French forces in Algeria or Tunisia has been significantly increased as a result of De Gaulle's recent statement of availability. He asserts that his regime now is in danger and has formally asked the United States for an immediate "token" shipment of small arms. [redacted]

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no

French West Africa: The diplomatic counselor to the French High Commissioner for West Africa states that all the local military commanders approve Salan's action in Algiers, but that the local situation is not yet critical. He says that the military forces might well take over control of the colony if civil strife breaks out in France and if Communist-influenced strikes occur at Dakar and other cities. [redacted]

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DAILY BRIEF

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III. THE WEST

no
*France: General de Gaulle is scheduled to make a public declaration of his intentions shortly. President Coty, extreme rightists, and French labor are all planning various actions depending on what de Gaulle says. Coty is pinning his hopes on a Mollet - Pinay combination as the only one capable of saving the regime. Rightists, who fear the General may issue a weak statement, are reported planning "revolutionary" action before the General speaks. The Communist-dominated labor federation has ordered its members to be on the alert against rightist moves. Non-Communist unions are taking similar but independent action.

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no
*Venezuela: The two civilian members of the governing junta who resigned on 18 May apparently did so because they disagreed with proposals of the military members for outlawing the Communist party. Since the riots during Vice President Nixon's visit, the junta has come under pressure from top-ranking military officials to outlaw the Communists and to curb the non-Communist Democratic Action party. These officials have also threatened to take over the government.

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DAILY BRIEF

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Situation in Algeria

The regime in Algiers appears to be drifting closer to a formal separation from Paris, and a point-blank threat of separatism might be made as an ultimate pressure tactic related to General de Gaulle's public statement on 19 May.

General Salan, who is apparently under ever-increasing influence from the Algiers Committee of Public Safety directed by General Massu and rightist settlers, has proceeded to establish de facto military and civil cabinets without consulting Paris. Salan, who represents the last shred of legality, probably has the loyalty of the military at least until there is a clear test between Paris and the Algiers regime, but General Massu appears to wield the real authority backed by the parachutists and settlers represented on the Algier committee.

The Algiers regime received a substantial boost when Jacques Soustelle, supporter of De Gaulle and a former Governor General of Algeria, arrived in Algiers and received a tumultuous ovation there and in several other Algerian cities. His presence will further strengthen the determination of the military-civilian junta now in control of all Algeria to insist on De Gaulle's return to power. He will particularly bolster the relative strength of the rightist settler elements who are the ones most opposed to any compromise with Paris.

The Algiers Committee of Public Safety appears little impressed with Pflimlin's parliamentary support in Paris, and the American consul general reports that there is no evidence of any serious thinking in Algiers about what would happen if there is prolonged separation from the Metropole. He believes all efforts of the committee and Massu aim at change of regime in France.

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[redacted] Algeria has enough gasoline for three months, enough food for six months, and sufficient ammunition for one year at the normal rate of utilization. [redacted]

Mounting Tunisian Concern Over Algerian Situation Inspires
New Request for US Arms

The Tunisian Government apparently believes De Gaulle's 15 May statement and the arrival in Algiers of former Governor General Jacques Soustelle have appreciably increased the likelihood of some action against Tunisia by French forces and has formally asked the United States for immediate military aid. President Bourguiba told Ambassador Jones on 16 May that he feared De Gaulle's action would encourage the "madmen" in Algiers who regard Tunisia as "enemy number one" to try to "impose a correction"--perhaps by sending French troops in Algeria to occupy at least a small area inside Tunisia. He also expressed concern that General Gambiez, commander of the 22,000 French forces in Tunisia who so far appears to have remained loyal to the Pflimlin government, might now "recalculate" his position and undertake some hostile action--Bourguiba suggested the apprehension of himself and his colleagues as one possibility--in concert with French military elements from Algeria.

Bourguiba concluded by formally requesting the United States to provide, on an urgent basis, "defensive" arms such as rifles and submachine guns for the still inadequately equipped 7,000-man Tunisian Army and National Guard. He thought delivery "by air or other fast means" of a "symbolic" shipment comparable to those made by the United States and Britain last November would have a deterrent effect upon any elements which might now be tempted to act against Tunisia.

Continued flights over Tunisian territory by French military aircraft in violation of standing Tunisian orders, new border incidents, and reports that French forces on the Algerian side of the Tunisian-Algerian frontier have recently been reinforced are also contributing to the mounting apprehension in Tunis. Acting jointly with Morocco, Tunisia has already notified UN Secretary General Hammarskjold that the need for an urgent meeting of the Security Council "could arise quickly."

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III. THE WEST

The French Crisis (As of 0100 hours)

President Coty intends to ask Premier Pflimlin to resign and make way for a new government headed by Socialist Guy Mollet and including Independent leader Antoine Pinay, but he is awaiting General de Gaulle's scheduled public statement of intentions on 19 May, [redacted]

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[redacted] Pinay, who thinks Pflimlin too weak to handle such a grave crisis, has indicated he would serve under Mollet, since he feels the only alternative is the investiture of De Gaulle.

Coty may hope that the Mollet-Pinay combination could still win back the allegiance of the armed forces and the Algiers regime, but a sharp attack by De Gaulle on the present French system could nullify the chances of even this combination. Chief of Staff Ely's resignation on 17 May underscores military dissatisfaction with Pflimlin and adds to the government's admitted uncertainty as to the intentions of top military leaders in France as well as Algeria.

Interior Minister Jules Moch, the tough Socialist who smashed the 1947 Communist strikes, has given strict orders to quell demonstrations from any quarter. Rightist organizations, particularly of veterans, may nevertheless attempt demonstrations which would provoke counter efforts from the major labor unions whose members have already been alerted for this contingency. Thus far the Socialist and Christian unions are attempting to act independently of the powerful Communist-dominated General Labor Confederation. The heavily reinforced civil security forces seem capable of controlling the situation unless the army is involved against them. [redacted]

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